

UPWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of an Ordinary meeting of the Parish Council, duly convened on Monday, 8th September 2008 at Upwell village hall. Commenced at 6.45 pm with Councillor Neil Morgan in the chair.

Attending:

Cllr. David Barnard
Cllr. Jill Gooch
Cllr. Andrew Harrison
Cllr. Keith Harrison
Cllr. Prue Lester
Cllr. Neil Morgan
Cllr. David Pope
Cllr. Chris Robinson (joined the meeting at 7.12pm)
Cllr. Sylvie Short
Cllr. Ros Shorting (joined the meeting at 7.38pm)

Clerk – Kate Cobley
Asst. Clerk – Kate Bennett

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr. Crofts, Cllr. Humm, Borough Councillor Spikings and County Councillor Humphrey.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

3. Public Forum

No members of the Public chose to address the Council.

4. Report from Council Surgery

No members of the Public attended surgery this month.

5. Minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on August 11th 2008

On a proposal by Cllr. Gooch, seconded by Cllr. Lester, the minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Matters arising from the Minutes (information only)

Item 6.12.b Performance of NCC Highways. Cllr. Pope asked whether any communication had been received from County Councillor Humphrey, who had been asked to investigate the performance of NCC Highways contractors. The Clerk read out an email which had been received from Graham Simpson at NCC Highways, via Cllr. Humphrey.

The email refuted any problems with the quality and length of time work had taken in Upwell recently and the time taken to get around to making urgent repairs. Cllr. Pope commented that this was factually incorrect in parts and did not answer the initial question of how much these works had actually cost. The meeting agreed with Cllr. Pope that it was unhappy with the amount of expenditure and time that NCC Highways had taken in carrying out this work and asked for further communication to be made with Graham Simpson to this end.

ACTION: Clerk to contact Graham Simpson at NCC Highways and CC County Councillor Humphrey.

Item 13.c Riverbank Cut. Councillors asked whether any response had been received to the proposed letter to The Middle Level Commissioners regarding the problems with the last riverbank cut. The Clerk informed the meeting that no response had yet been received but there was improvement in the condition of the banks and the damaged bench had been replaced.

Item 13.d 'Chicken Run'. Cllr. Pope informed Council that he had been approached by the Fenland Citizen regarding this issue and had declined to publicise the issue for fear of making it worse. There was a discussion about on-going problems with youths congregating on the playing field/bowls club/war memorial/playground with the general consensus that with the schools back and longer, colder nights drawing in, the problems would probably resolve themselves. It was agreed that the issue should be highlighted in the forthcoming Parish Council Newsletter.

7. Correspondence

The Clerk drew members' attention to a number of items received and reminded them to look at the correspondence folder for information about activities.

Item a Mott MacDonald Letter & Plans. A set of plans detailing the forthcoming work planned by Mott MacDonald to resurface Town Street in Upwell was discussed. The meeting was unhappy with the plans to 'patch' the carriageway rather than resurface it as the original plan was to fully resurface the road – this was done but in the wrong place and the Council was unhappy with the news that a lesser job would be carried out. The Council also discussed the state of roads around the Parish, especially along Pious Drive, Upwell and the majority of footpaths, which required surveying and repairing quite extensively.

ACTION: Clerk to write to NCC to request further works. (cc Cllr. H. Humphrey)

8. Health and Safety Issues.

There were no Health and Safety issues to report this month.

Cllr. Barnard reported that the planned risk assessment had not yet been carried out due to work commitments.

9. A Debate on the Parish Council's response to the Boundary Commission's draft proposal regarding Local Government Reorganisation in Norfolk.

Paperwork detailing the draft proposal had previously been circulated.

The Chairman introduced the subject for debate.

(Cllr. Robinson joined the meeting)

A response from Cllr. Crofts had been circulated by email previously and the Chairman then read out his own response to the issue.

There was a general discussion about the situation. The general feeling of the Council was that the current system, although not perfect, worked well and represented people at a local level. It was not felt that a unitary tier of government based in Norwich would adequately understand or represent the local needs and structures of the West of Norfolk. There was concern that the costs of any reorganisation would have to be met from what was considered to be already stretched resources and that the issue was a political move by the current government as Norwich would stand to gain most from unitary representation. There were questions about the constitution of the proposed Community Partnership Boards and their effectiveness and about the number of people and/or stakeholders who would need to be in favour of the proposed reorganisation in order for it to continue.

Ultimately, Cllr. Morgan felt that it was not in the Council's best interest to continue considering the proposal in any more depth as it was felt (generally amongst Council members) that it was unlikely to progress any further and due to the fact that the Parish Council had to be realistic about its own constitution: the suggestion that Parish Councils take on more services was interesting but previous experience investigating the possibility of this had led the Council to draw the conclusion that it was not financially viable, nor did the Council have the staff to carry out the extra workload created.

Cllr. Pope added that the only area to benefit from the proposal would be the east of the County due to the economies of Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. He suggested that Council Tax would increase locally although fewer services were likely to be delivered (such as a decreased rubbish collection service to two weekly collections)

(Cllr. Shorting joined the meeting)

There was a discussion around the 'Quality Status' of the Council and how it had "stood for nothing" so far nor would in the proposed reorganisation.

Cllr. Short agreed that the proposal was not the way forward but also noted that the current status quo was not perfect either and asked whether there was an opportunity to review or revise the current situation. Cllr. Pope agreed that an enhanced two tier system, continuing the local representation of West Norfolk would be a far better way to proceed.

Proposal: To formulate a response to The Boundary Committee's Draft Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation from the comments made by Councillors during this debate and from the comments received prior to the event from Cllr. Crofts.

Proposed By: Cllr. Barnard

Seconded By: Cllr. Gooch

ACTION: Cllr. Morgan to formulate a reply.

10. Agenda items for the next meeting.

- Report on Risk Assessment
- Unitary Status

11. Date and time of the next meeting.

Monday, 13th October 2008. Commencing at 7.30pm at Upwell village hall. Apologies were tendered in advance by Cllr. Morgan.

Signed as a true record of the meeting: _____

Date: _____

DRAFT